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Letter dated 28 April 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the address to the nation by President Laurent Gbagbo on 26 April 2005, as part of the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this document circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Philippe D. **Djangone-Bi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 28 April 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

Address to the nation by President Gbagbo
(26 April 2005)

Ivorians,

My dear compatriots,

Dear friends of Côte d'Ivoire,

On 19 September 2002, our country, Côte d'Ivoire, was attacked. Once the assailants had been driven out of Abidjan, they established themselves in Bouaké and several other cities in the north and west of the country. They thereby transformed a failed coup into an armed rebellion that has plunged the country into the most serious crisis in its history.

Since the beginning of this crisis, I have regularly updated you on the evolving situation, the obstacles encountered in our efforts to restore peace and the many misunderstandings that have arisen regarding the ways and means of achieving normality. I have also listened to you before taking any decisions affecting the future of our nation. Despite the disappointments that we have suffered, I have never been in any doubt as to the outcome of this crisis, for which our nation has already paid too high a price.

As soon as I returned from Italy on 22 September 2002, I took a clear stand for the path of negotiation. In the name of Côte d'Ivoire, I agreed not only to negotiate with those who had taken up arms against the motherland, but also to place these negotiations, from the outset, under the aegis of the international community — first under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States in Accra, and then in Lomé.

In doing so, I demonstrated that the historic responsibilities placed on us by our country's position in West Africa require us to resolve this crisis as quickly as possible.

In Lomé, we thought that the main problem was the reintegration of the mutineers into the army. We have met this demand. However, despite Lomé, the country plunged into war. We therefore agreed to meet again, on Avenue Kléber in Paris. I have already stated that the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was not a good agreement. However, I agreed to implement it, because it contained two essential provisions:

(i) The disarmament of the rebels, as soon as the Government of National Reconciliation is formed;

(ii) The principle that any constitutional amendments must respect the processes indicated in the Constitution.

With regard to article 35 of the Constitution, it seemed that, for ideological reasons, the international community wished to know whether, in a melting pot such as Côte d'Ivoire, the fundamental law sufficiently guarantees participation by all in

democratic life. This is why, despite the reticence and reservations expressed by some people, I submitted the draft amendment drawn up at Marcoussis to Parliament, with a view to submitting it to a referendum, the only process provided for in the Constitution.

However, disarmament has not taken place and, those who previously demanded that article 35 be amended, are no longer making that demand today.

It is therefore with the Accra III Agreement and above all with the Pretoria Agreement and the letter from the Mediator that we are beginning to understand. This is why, on behalf of all of you, I would like solemnly to pay homage tonight to President Thabo Mbeki, who listened to everyone in order to understand and help us to understand. I salute the positive spirit which prevailed during the negotiations in Pretoria.

Your various interventions during the consultations that I initiated at the Palace of the President of the Republic following the Pretoria Agreement and publication of the letter from the Mediator have shown that the people of Côte d'Ivoire have also understood the real problem. The problem is neither the reintegration of the mutineers, nor article 35 of the Constitution, but rather the candidacy of a certain man for the presidency of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the candidacy of Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara. This is the substance of both the Pretoria Agreement and the letter from the Mediator.

In your various interventions, you all told me one and the same thing. You told me that the Pretoria Agreement and the letter from the Mediator can and must help us to end the war and restore peace in Côte d'Ivoire, while respecting our Constitution. I have understood you.

This is why, my dear compatriots, having listened to people from all social and occupational backgrounds in the country and taking note of the Pretoria Agreement and the recommendations of the Mediator, I consulted the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Constitutional Council. Following those consultations, I decided to implement article 48 of our Constitution. As of today, I will take such exceptional measures as the situation requires. I therefore hereby decide the following:

1. In accordance with the letter from the South African Mediator, the candidates presented by the political parties that signed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement are hereby declared eligible for the October 2005 presidential elections only. Thus, Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara may, if he so desires, present his candidacy for the October 2005 presidential elections.

2. As of today, given the urgency of the situation and the absolute necessity of organizing the elections on the dates stipulated in the Constitution, I grant a mandate to the National Institute of Statistics, and to that body alone, to establish, without delay, electoral lists for the 2005 general elections.

3. At the same time, I order the National Institute of Statistics to introduce, without delay, voting cards, displaying, at the very least, the holder's photograph and fingerprint.

4. In order to prevent any challenges, I order the commission responsible for organizing the elections to make all the necessary arrangements to ensure that each party involved in the elections has time to verify the electoral lists, as necessary.

My dear compatriots,

Dear friends of Côte d'Ivoire,

Many of the issues raised by our compatriots have not been addressed in this speech. I have not forgotten them. I have not swept them under the carpet. When the time is right, they will be addressed. By virtue of the powers vested in me by article 48 of our Constitution, as of today, and until the end of the crisis, I will take such measures as the circumstances may warrant.

God bless Côte d'Ivoire!